

standards for all quality of life services. Because of these efforts, the lives of service and family members worldwide have been improved and enriched.

Mr. Pang has led the Force Management Policy organization to new heights of efficiency and accomplishment across the spectrum of civilian and military personnel management; personnel support, families and education; equal opportunity; morale welfare and recreation and resale activities; and women in the military. He is leaving a legacy of service to the Department of Defense and our Nation, and most importantly, to our men and women serving in uniform, of dedicated service and lasting contributions.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 12:30 under the same terms as previously agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADOPTION AND SAFE FAMILIES ACT OF 1997

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, I would like to express my strong support for legislation that will be considered by the Senate and has been considered by the House this morning. This legislation is the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. This bill, which is a compromise version of legislation that I introduced originally now has as supporters and sponsors: Senator ROCKEFELLER, Senator CRAIG, Senator BOND, Senator DEWINE, Senator COATS, Senator JEFFORDS, Senator LANDRIEU, Senator LEVIN, Senator KERREY, Senator DORGAN, Senator MOYNIHAN, Senator MOSELEY-BRAUN, and Senator JOHNSON. Mr. President, this legislation will make some critical changes to the child welfare system—changes that will vastly improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of children currently in foster care and waiting for adoptive homes. I am very hopeful that the President, who has indicated his support for this legislation, will sign this measure promptly.

Mr. President, just yesterday, there was yet another story in the newspapers about a young girl, 9 years old, who was found dead from severe abuse in her sister's Bronx apartment. The tragic story of young Sabrina Green's short life is harrowing, and it is all too reminiscent of the cases we read and hear about, unfortunately, every single day. Each time I read about a case like

Sabrina Green's, I feel outrage and frustration with a system that cannot take care of the most vulnerable members of our society. Now, Mr. President, we cannot bring Sabrina Green back to life, nor can we bring back any of the hundreds of children who have died under similar circumstances; but we can take action to prevent such deaths in the future, and that is what we are doing today.

The bill that will come over to us shortly, Mr. President, will put the safety and health of the child first. That is a significant change in the law. Under this legislation, the safety and health of the child will come first. We will not continue the current system of always putting the needs and rights of the biological parents first. While we still believe that family reunification is a worthy goal, it's time we recognize that some families simply cannot and should not be kept together. Children who have suffered severe abuse or whose parents have committed violent crimes should be moved out of those homes rapidly and into adoptive homes. Our bill does that. Children who are in foster care for over 15 months deserve to have a decision made about their future. Our legislation does both of those things.

It is also time we put a stop to children lingering in foster care for years. There are currently half a million children in this country—500,000 children in the United States of America—who have been removed from their abusive or neglectful parents and are living in foster care. In my State, there are 1,500 of these children in foster care. Nationally, each of these children in foster care will remain so for an average of 3 years before a decision is made about their future, and many of them will wait much longer. The average is 3 years. Some have stayed for years and years in foster care. Today, we are sending those half a million children a message of hope. Under this legislation, their time in foster care will be shortened. States will be required to make a permanent plan for these children after a year, and if a child has been in foster care for more than 15 months—1 year and 3 months—the State will be required to take the first steps toward terminating parental rights and finding an adoptive home.

Terminating parental rights is the critical first step in moving children into permanent placements, but it is not enough. We also must promote adoption of these children, and our bill does that. Our bill removes geographic barriers to adoption. There are no limitations under this bill about children in one State having to be adopted in that State. We remove these geographic barriers to adoption and require States to document efforts to move children into safe adoptive homes. We also provide financial bonuses to States that increase their adoption rights. There is money here for States that increase the rate of adoption in their States.

There are legal and procedural barriers to adoption, and there are also financial barriers. Lack of medical coverage is one such barrier to families who want to adopt special needs children. What is a special needs child? It is a child who has medical problems or physical problems, or a child of such an age, maybe 15 or 16, in a foster home. Adoptive parents are very reluctant to take on a child of that age. Many of these children have significant physical and mental health problems due to years of abuse and neglect and foster care. Many of these children have been shuttled from foster parent to foster parent. So the adoptive parents are taking a huge financial risk in adopting these children if the parents are not guaranteed that there will be health insurance for these special needs children. Our bill ensures that special needs children who are going to be adopted will have medical coverage. We also ensure that children whose adoptive parents die or whose adoptions disrupt or terminate for some reason, they will continue to receive Federal subsidies when they are adopted by new parents.

Mr. President, I am very proud of this legislation. The Senate and House sponsors have worked tirelessly for many months to come to an agreement. Our shared commitment to improving the lives of these children brought us together. In closing, I want to especially thank my good friend, Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER, who has spent years devoting his time and attention to these children. I also thank Senator CRAIG, who brought his own personal experiences and dedication to this effort, and Senator DEWINE, who brought so much expertise and professional experience to this initiative. I also want to thank the other members of the coalition, those Senators that I mentioned earlier, and I will repeat their names—Senator BOND, Senator COATS, Senator JEFFORDS, Senator LANDRIEU, Senator LEVIN, Senator KERREY, Senator DORGAN, Senator MOYNIHAN, Senator MOSELEY-BRAUN, and Senator JOHNSON.

I also want to congratulate the House sponsors who worked so hard on this—Congressman CAMP and Congresswoman KENNELLY.

I thank our staffs for the extraordinary efforts they devoted to achieving passage of this legislation. Particularly, I salute Laurie Rubiner, of my staff, and Barbara Pryor, of Senator ROCKEFELLER's staff. All of these individuals that are mentioned, and others, have been so helpful in achieving passage of this legislation, which I think has just now passed the House and will be coming here. We look for rapid action here.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FOREIGN OPERATIONS FISCAL
YEAR 1998 APPROPRIATIONS—
CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, under the previous order, I submit a report of the committee of conference on the bill (H.R. 2159) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the conference report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows.

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2159) have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

The Senate will proceed to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of November 12, 1997.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is now 30 minutes of debate equally divided. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I am pleased the Senate is taking up this afternoon H.R. 2159, the foreign operations, export financing and related programs for fiscal year 1998. As is the case every year, it was not easy getting to this point partly because this bill is very different than the bills we passed in the last several years.

First and foremost, we have increased our commitment to America's global leadership by nearly \$1 billion. We have provided \$12.8 billion for the 1998 foreign assistance programs and an additional \$359 million in arrears we have owed to multilateral institutions, bringing the grand total to \$13.1 billion, a shade under the administration's request.

Let me review the important contributions this bill will make to stability and security around the world.

First, Mr. President, we have substantially increased our commitment to the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union over last year's levels; \$770 million for the region has been provided, including earmarks of \$225 million for Ukraine, \$92.5 million for Georgia, and \$87.5 million for Armenia. Funds for Georgia and Armenia, along with resources to assist the victims of the Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhaz conflicts are included within a new \$250 million regional Caucasus fund. Congressman CALLAHAN, my counterpart in the House, deserves credit for the idea to create this fund, believing it would provide incentive to achieve a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In an effort to assure balance to our regional approach and promote Amer-

ican energy security interests, we have ended the confusion over the impact of section 907 and clearly authorized OPIC, Ex-Im, TDA, and the Foreign Commercial Service support for American businesses operating in Azerbaijan and the Caspian.

I believe we have served our clear interest in securing stability and economic growth in the New Independent States with these earmarks and the overall level of funding for that area. I also think we have served both our principles and security interests with two Senate provisions which were included in the conference report.

The first addresses the issue of Russian cooperation with Iran on its nuclear and ballistic missile program. I have repeatedly expressed my disappointment with the administration's reluctance to leverage U.S. assistance to secure an end to this lethal cooperation. Let me remind my colleagues that we have provided more than \$4 billion in aid to Russia—more than any we have provided to any combination of other countries.

For the past several years, the Senate has carried a provision suspending aid unless the Russians stopped their training, technology transfer and support for the Iranian nuclear program. Each year a waiver has been added in conference because of a threat of veto and the President has in fact exercised the waiver. Each time he has done so the Iranians have moved closer to acquiring and testing a ballistic missile. This year, instead of a blanket waiver, the President will have to prove the Russians have taken specific steps to curtail the nuclear cooperation. While it is not as tough as I would have liked, it is a vast improvement over the broad waiver we have given him in the past.

I also want to draw attention to the efforts of Senator BENNETT and Senator GORDON SMITH who worked hard to assure inclusion of a provision conditioning assistance on Russia's protection of religious freedom. There is no freedom more fundamental than the right to worship in a church of one's choice. The legislation President Yeltsin signed into law appears to have a chilling effect on religious freedom, a problem we have addressed by requiring the President to certify that the government has not enforced or implemented laws which would discriminate against religious groups or religious communities.

Now, Mr. President, beyond the NIS, I think the bill clearly serves our national security interests in the Middle East by sustaining our past earmarks for Israel and Egypt and expanding and earmarking support to Jordan. At a time when the foreign aid request increased by nearly \$1 billion, I was disappointed the administration only asked for \$70 million for Jordan.

An increase was a very high priority for me, and I am pleased to report the conference agreement provides \$225 million in economic and security assistance as recognition for King Hus-

sein's contribution and determination to achieve a durable peace and regional stability.

Let me once again note my concern about Egypt's role in the peace process. For more than a decade, the bill has consistently stated that resources are provided as a measure of the recipient's commitment and support for peace. For the past 18 months, there is no question that Cairo has not faithfully served that key interest. Just this week, Mr. President, Egyptian officials announced they would not send representatives to an economic summit designed to restore relations and rebuild confidence. This is not an isolated example of problems in our relations with Egypt. In particular, Cairo's international campaign to remove sanctions against Libya is inexcusable. I expect that the bill's provision to withhold 5 percent of the aid to any country failing to enforce the sanctions may affect Egypt's assistance, notwithstanding the earmark. Let me put everyone on notice that if this persists, once again, next year as I did this year, I will not be including an earmark for Egypt in the chairman's mark as we begin the process of developing the appropriations bill for foreign operations for next year.

Turning to other areas, the bill also reflects the Senate's commitment to strengthen our economic interests by increasing over the President's request our support for the Export-Import Bank. The Bank provides crucial support to U.S. exporters, creating jobs and income. I did not think the President's request was adequate to meet America's commercial interests. Consistent with the Senate's decision, we provide \$51 million more than the request for a total of \$683 million.

This support comes with a word of caution for the board. I share my colleagues' concerns about the substantial funding that has been made available to Gazprom by the Bank, given Gazprom's announced plans to develop Iranian gas fields. The Bank must suspend support for Gazprom until the problem can be resolved. Complementing support for the Bank, we have provided the full request and authorization language for OPIC and \$41.5 million for the Trade Development Agency. Both are consistent with Senate positions.

Mr. President, in Asia, important priorities were sustained in the conference report. The Senate's position increasing aid to supporters of democracy in Burma, restricting assistance to the Hun Sen Government in Cambodia, and funding for the Korean Energy Development Organization was included. With regard to KEDO—that is the Korean Energy Development Organization—the conference agreed to our effort to reduce the costs of purchasing oil on the spot market by fully funding the 1998 costs and providing \$10 million in back debt if other donors contribute sufficient funds to clear the balance.

After much negotiation and some modifications, we also preserved the